



*From “Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs) Case Studies”
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Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California: *Protecting Washoe wetlands through inventory, monitoring and outreach efforts that promote wetland preservation*

Introduction

The importance of wetlands has long been known to the Washoe People and consequently, their beliefs and practices developed to protect the health of wetlands have been transmitted from generation to generation over thousands of years. Plants found only in certain wetland areas within their aboriginal homelands continue to provide food and medicine to the Washoe People. Today, Washoe People remain staunch in their beliefs that the few remaining wetlands must be protected from further degradation and the wetlands that have been destroyed or degraded must be restored. The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California has made significant strides in defining its wetland systems through the supportive funding of WPDGs. The Washoe Tribe's Trust Lands are scattered throughout two states which creates many challenges for identifying and protecting wetland resources. The tribe has received three EPA grants that have advanced Washoe Environmental Protection Department's (WEPD) protection of tribal wetlands and education of the Washoe community about these important resources.

WPDG Activity

The WEPD staff completed a Wetlands Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), which was approved by EPA in 2002. The QAPP provided a science-based perspective of delineation and classification of wetlands and an assessment of their biological condition. Recommendations were made for future restoration efforts that include facilitating improved grazing management through conservation and structural protection of hot spring areas, palustrine meadows and a riparian corridor. WEPD successfully mapped and assessed 67 wetlands within the hundreds of square miles of Washoe Tribal Ancestral Lands, including the Carson Valley, the Pine Nut Mountain Range and the Lake Tahoe Basin. WEPD also delineated 576 acres of wetlands and established 33 vegetation transects and photo points.

WEPD developed a wetlands inventory map utilizing GPS/GIS technology and produced the Washoe Wetlands Monitoring Handbook to provide an educational tool for Washoe community members. The handbook showed characteristics and function of wetlands utilizing children's drawings and photographs. The project also encouraged community involvement and enlisted the support of students in the Washoe Language School of Dresslerville in the development of the handbook. WEPD staff engaged Language School children in practical field activities to learn about wetland systems and encouraged the children to create drawings of wetland art and provide ideas for the book. Future classes of Washoe children can use this resource to learn about the diversity and productivity of wetlands. The wetlands inventory map and wetlands monitoring handbook provided useful information to amend the tribe's Comprehensive Land Use

Plan and the knowledge base of wetland systems gained as a result of this project has also served as a basis for managing and protecting Washoe lands.

Current Work and Future Plans

WEPD is currently evaluating mitigation measures and working to develop a report with recommendations for improving the effectiveness of compensatory wetland mitigation. WEPD will propose amendments to the Washoe Tribal Development Planning System to enable them to more effectively enforce wetland protection on Tribal lands. These efforts will increase the tribe's capacity to protect wetlands by strengthening Tribal land use plans, regulations and mitigation measures. Because Washoe Tribal lands and allotment lands are interwoven with lands managed by the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the states of California and Nevada, the activities above will build stronger partnerships between the Tribe and these agencies to achieve wetland conservation for entire watersheds.

Please visit the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California website (<http://www.washoetribe.us/>) to learn more about the Tribe's culture and history and for additional information on how the Washoe Environmental Protection Department is working to protect wetlands and other natural resources within tribal lands.

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